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IMPORTANT

hello! my name is artemis, and you may know me from my other books! this book has absolutely no tie to those books whatsoever. this is just a silly idea i got while i was walking. since this book is during the prehistoric times (more specifically, late cretaceous period), i want to cover and clarify some topics.

every creature that existed during these times had flipping long names, am i right? so, to make this easier for both you and i, i am going to explain what i will do.

since most of the animals, dinosaurs and non-dinosaurs, have quite lengthy names, i've decided to name any prey that the clans will eat in the story and name them after current-day prey.

purgatorius: a small, furry critter with a long tail. the only picture of it i've seen looks like a mouse with a furry tail, so i am going to call it 'mouse' in the story to save me from two things. a) i don't want to write purgatorius and b) you guys will probably forgot what the heck that is.

megatherium: a giant ground sloth. i've certainly heard about the 'giant ground sloth', but never its actual name. instead of writing both of those names, i'm going to go with 'sloth'. just remember it's bigger than your average sloth.

archicebus: honestly, looks like an aye-aye but cuter. i'll call this 'monkey'.

here's a mouthful: volaticotherium antiquus. they look like a sugar glider or a flying squirrel, so i'm going with 'flying squirrel'.

agilodocodon scansorius: the description i read said that they were like squirrels, but the picture looked like a long-faced mink, so i'll call these 'minks'.

tired of reading all of these awful names? i am too. these are the

only ones for now (the clans eat other things too, but those are easier to type. they also eat berries).

*animals **might** be added if i do more research

i can already hear you guys telling me some of these animals may have not existed during the late cretaceous era. you're probably right, but make it easier for me please. there's a reason i chose the late cretaceous era (since it's the last era in prehistoric times, but...). most dinosaurs that we know (take the infamous tyrannosaurus rex, for example) are alive during this time. i did my research on all dinosaurs that i want to include in this story and they all lasted until the end. prey-wise... yeah, sorry, some may be extinct by the late cretaceous era, but it was hard finding those alone.

i know ground sloths weren't even a thing in the late cretaceous era (they came later) but i sort of want them to be in my story. i did want glyptodons too, but that's crossing the line. someone's going to start yelling at me.

okay, i have the feeling one of you will ask 'artemis, why did you think this was a good idea to do? like, the dinosaurs will gobble these cats up before you can say 'mouse!'. honestly, i think if smaller cats were alive during these times, they could go a couple million years before going extinct. you don't have to listen to my opinion though.

this story will probably have plotholes since i came up with the whole plot in less than two days. oh, well. this is nothing more than a silly story that i'm doing purely out of fun.

also, my book is marked mature because it depicts sacrifices, death, blood, gore, and other topics along those lines. read at your own caution as i will not put any warnings at the beginning of a chapter.

at the end of this book, i might add a glossary to explain some animals/plants/etc. but keep in mind i **may never finish the book.** i hope i will, i like the plot i came up with. do ask questions about terms you don't know about. it'll give me an idea of what to include in my glossary when that day comes. if you search it up, that's cool, but it'd be helpful to give me a heads-up you didn't know what a

term meant.

cover was made by me, probably will be replaced at a later date.

without further ado,

don't stop running

Clan Religions and Ranks

the three clans starring in my book are called amberclan, raptorclan, and bushclan (you can see where i got lazy naming one). they all live on the same island, but they all possess different skills. amberclan cats are very good at running and they have a very lean, narrow frame to help them run. raptorclan cats are very good at climbing, undaunted to climb to the tops of spindly, rocking trees. their builds are stockier and bigger and their paw pads are rough. bushclan cats are very good at hiding in thick foliage, using that to their advantage to narrowly escape larger dinosaurs.

these three clans are very nomadic, never staying in one place for too long. they don't live with each other, but they tend to stick in the same areas together. it's hard to keep intact with other clans if one clan is being chased away. if a clan sometimes do not know the whereabouts of the other two clans, they don't worry about it too much. in some way or another, the three clans all somehow meet back up uncoincidentally. enough about that, though.

if you have any questions while reading, ask away! i'll try to answer to the best of my ability because this can be confusing stuff. if you don't want to read all of that, skip ahead, but you might be confused if you do skip this.

AMBERCLAN'S RELIGION AND RANKS

amberclan believes in moonclan, their ancestors that reside on the moon. when there is no moon out, amberclan feels like they aren't being protected by their ancestors and every cat in the clan stays awake the entire night.

COMMANDER • amberclan's leader is referred to as commander. they name newborn kits and do not perform any ceremonies besides renaming ceremonies. they do not gain lives, but if a commander

wishes to, they may obtain a second life through a trial. the commander has to sleep under a full moon in the wide open. if a carnivorous dinosaur comes and eats them, it was a sign they weren't worthy enough for two lives. this ritual is NOT necessary and is not performed by all commanders. commanders take on the -star suffix.

LIEUTENANT • second-in-command to the leader is the lieutenant. they oversee all training and do all the ceremonies (trainees, gatherers, fighters, healer, and ancients ceremony). they sometimes make patrols, sometimes don't. amberclan cats like to make their own patrols, as it is a way to make friends.

HEALER • a healer is the medicine cat of the clan. they read signs from the moon every night. a healer does not take on a trainee; once the current healer dies, a kit is chosen at random to become the next healer. that healer will have to learn on their own and ask their clanmates what they know about any herbs. sometimes, a healer that knows they will die soon teaches a kit the basics of herbs. a healer can have a mate, but the clan frowns upon them if they do decide to take on a mate.

FIGHTERS • fighters protect the clan from anything dangerous. they warn the clan if a large, meat-eating dinosaur is coming since they can't handle those. amberclan goes into hiding or leaves the area as a result. when traveling, fighters have to form a circle around their clanmates.

GATHERERS • gatherers are the ones who hunt and gather herbs and building supplies. their job is the hardest since amberclan barely stays in a location for more than two moons. hunting and gathering takes a lot, and lots of that hard work goes to waste.

TRAINEES • trainees are the apprentices of amberclan. they become trainees at six moons old and train until they are deemed ready. however, the trainee has to have a minimum of three moons before the mentor can assess them.

KIT-BEARERS • kit-bearers are what they sound like. they bear kits. a she-cat can never be a permanent kit-bearer since there's too much work to be done. they'd just be another mouth to feed for no

reason. kit-bearers are often upset when they can't name their kits.

KITS • self-explanatory... anything significant about them has been stated in the TRAINEES section.

ANCIENTS • ancients are the retired fighters and gatherers. if the clan is migrating and there is a carnivorous dinosaur after them, the clan will sacrifice an ancient to use as a distraction so they can successfully get away. ancients serve their clan willingly and their memory is preserved forever.

RAPTORCLAN'S RELIGION AND RANKS

raptorclan believes in two godly cats, fang and leaf. fang symbolizes carnivorous dinosaurs while leaf symbolize herbivorous and omnivorous dinosaurs. if a carnivorous dinosaur is after them, they believe they have upset or disrespected fang in some way. if an herbivorous or omnivorous dinosaur comes their way, raptorclan thinks leaf is telling them they're safe for a few days.

CHIEF • the chief is the one who watches for signs from fang or leaf. they are not the leader of the clan, but they choose the two leaders, the head guard and head hunter. they choose either the head guard or the head hunter as their successor before their time comes to an end. when a cat becomes chief, their suffix is either -fang or -leaf, depending on whether they came from the guards (-fang) or the hunters (-leaf). they do not gain any lives.

HEAD GUARD & HUNTER • head guard and hunter are cats chosen by the chief. the head guard leads side-by-side with the head hunter, but the head guard cannot order the hunters, and vice versa with the head hunter. the head guard and head hunter work together when it comes to ceremonies and patrols.

MENDER • a mender's job is to heal cats. since the chief handles signs from fang and leaf, menders can go out as they please and gather herbs with an escort (safety measures). there can be several menders. menders can have a mate and even drop out of their role (only if there are two other menders) and become a guard or hunter.

GUARDS • their only job is to guard camp and protect the hunters when on patrol. if a chief is struggling to choose between two cats to become head guard, those two cats will fight until one surrenders. claws and teeth are allowed, but killing is not allowed.

HUNTERS • their only job is to hunt. if a chief is struggling to choose between two cats to become head hunter, those two cats will go out at sunrise and try to hunt the most prey before sundown. whoever brings back the most prey becomes head hunter. in some scenarios, one of the two contestants may not show up at sundown. the other cat becomes head hunter by default, even if the other hunter shows up eventually with more prey.

TYROS • tyros are the apprentices of raptorclan. a kit becomes a tyro once their parents say they are ready. rash, ill-mannered kits usually wait longer while the respectful, promising kits can become tyros as early as five moons. all tyros must train for five moons before earning their name.

MATRIARCHS • the queens of raptorclan. if a matriarch wishes to, they may stay a matriarch, but they are expected to go on patrol from time to time to stay in shape and contribute to the clan.

KITS • anything significant about them has been stated in the TYROS section.

SENIORS • raptorclan honors their seniors. after many seasons, any cat that retires is treated with utmost respect. tyros like to drop by and listen to their tales. when a senior is near death or is deathly ill, raptorclan's chief will ask them how they would like to die. there are three options: abandoned and left to starve or get eaten, sacrificed to a meat-eating dinosaur to appease fang, or be killed by the claws of their own clanmate. most sensible seniors choose the second option so fang doesn't wreak havoc upon raptorclan.

BUSHCLAN'S RELIGION AND RANKS

bushclan has no belief system.

CAPTAIN • the captain is in charge of the entire clan. they do ceremonies, patrols, everything. they rely on their assembly when

they cross a tough problem. they do not gain any lives. they keep their current suffix.

ASSEMBLY • the cats in the assembly are expected to assist the captain when the captain is in need of help. the assembly consists of the four oldest cats in bushclan. when the captain dies, the oldest in the assembly becomes the next captain. if the oldest does not wish to become the captain, the second oldest becomes captain.

CURER • the curer heals their clanmates. they cannot take on a mate unless given permission by the captain.

LOOKOUTS • lookouts are cats who barely get a wink of sleep. they stay up day and night, watching out for predators and keeping an eye on traps set up by the trackers. if there is any sign of danger, a lookout runs to other lookout posts and bushclan's camp to warn them.

TRACKERS • trackers are very clever hunters who make traps or lure prey with berries. trackers set up traps throughout the land to catch prey or momentarily stop small predators. some traps have been super effective and have killed small predators, however it's a chance thing. trackers will actually hunt, but they typically craft traps.

PUPILS • pupils are trained in both fields in their first moon of training. they have two mentors, one from the lookouts and one from the trackers. at the end of their first moon, they have to choose which field they'd like to become. pupils have seven moons of training and are not assessed.

DAMES • dames are she-cats expecting or nursing kits. once their kits become pupils, dames are expected to go back to their previous field. she-cats who have two or more litters may permanently stay dames.

KITS • kits become pupils at the age of six moons.

there is no elder-like rank in bushclan as assembly holds the four oldest warriors. retirement is a no in bushclan.

oh my goodness-

1673 words just about some background lore. my hands hurt.

Excerpt

The sound of the velociraptor's long talon clicking and tapping against the stone made shivers of fear run up her spine, making her hunch her shoulders and press harder against the rocks. The low sound of a trill in the velociraptor's throat bounced around in the dark atmosphere, adding onto the suspense.

She screwed her eyes shut, awaiting her death. The velociraptor would find her, she knew it. But she was doing this for her Clan. They'd escape with the eggs and be well-fed for days. Warmth embraced her as she thought about the happy kits who wouldn't complain about hunger anymore. Her Clanmates would be happy again. All they'd lose is... her.

Allegiances

AMBERCLAN

COMMANDER: AMBROSIASTAR - a pale brown tom with white paws and belly; green eyes

LIEUTENANT: SPLINTERBITE - a dark brown tabby she-cat with sharp amber eyes

HEALER: MOSQUITOSPARK - a ginger-and-cream tom with amber eyes

FIGHTERS: CASCADESPIRIT - a fluffy blue she-cat with a white muzzle and chest; bright blue eyes
-trainee, VINEPAW

TUMBLESTONE - a pale ginger tabby she-cat with green eyes

CYCADRIPPLE - a brown tom with lighter spots and yellow eyes

PEPPERFANG - a black-and-white she-cat with dark blue eyes

KOMODOICE - a large ginger-and-white tom with dark yellow eyes
-trainee, HILLPAW

GATHERERS: FEATHERBLAZE - a sleek silver tom with white paws and amber eyes

CASSOWARYSHADE - a calico she-cat with bright green eyes

LAKEBERRY - a silver tabby she-cat with green eyes

OKAPISTRIPE - a brown-and-white tom with dark green eyes
-trainee, MAGNOLIAPAW

TRAINEES: VINEPAW - a brown-and-white she-cat with light

amber eyes

HILLPAW - a black tom with dark yellow eyes

MAGNOLIAPAW - a ginger-and-white she-cat with blue eyes

KIT-BEARERS: FERNSPLASH - a cream she-cat with seafoam-green eyes
-mother to AMBROSIASTAR's kits, BARKKIT, GINKGOKIT, and BUMBLEKIT

DAPPLEROSE - a pretty tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes
-expecting FEATHERBLAZE's kits

KITS: BARKKIT - a brown she-kit with round green eyes

GINKGOKIT - a brown-and-cream tom-kit with leaf-green eyes

BUMBLEKIT - a dark cream tom-kit with green eyes

ANCIENT: BIRDCALL - a scarred ginger tabby she-cat with yellow eyes

RAPTORCLAN

CHIEF: SLOTHLEAF - a fluffy cream tom with round yellow eyes

HEAD GUARD: FOGGYPUDDLE - a gray-and-white she-cat with sky-blue eyes

HEAD HUNTER: PINEFALL - a stocky brown tom with green eyes

MENDERS: FALLENSUN - a light gray she-cat with dark yellow eyes

CLIFFPOND - a silver tabby she-cat with amber eyes
-tyro, EGGPAW

GUARDS: BRANCHLEAP - a messy-furred ginger tabby tom with green eyes

FIGFROST - a white she-cat with bright yellow eyes

GRASSBREEZE - a tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes

SANDCREEK - a pale cream tom with yellow eyes

HUNTERS: LITTLEFLIGHT - a small black tom with amber eyes

RIPPLETHORN - a spiky-furred blue she-cat with green eyes
-tyro, SKYPAW

GOLDENSAP - a ginger tabby tom with yellow eyes

SCORPIONFIRE - a messy-furred dark gray she-cat with a white muzzle and paws; dark blue eyes
-tyro, CLOUDYPAW

TYROS: EGGPAW - a brown-and-white tom with yellow eyes

SKYPAW - a brown she-cat with white paws and belly; moss-green eyes

CLOUDYPAW - a white she-cat with brown brown splotches and pale yellow eyes

MATRIARCHS: CONIFERCLOUD - a fluffy blue she-cat with amber eyes
-mother to SANDCREEK's kits, CANOPYKIT and BROOKKIT

GAZANIABLOOM - a calico she-cat with ice-blue eyes
-mother to LITTLEFLIGHT's kit, WHITEKIT

KITS: CANOPYKIT - a cream she-kit with bright amber eyes

BROOKKIT - a blue-and-cream tom-kit with wide yellow eyes

WHITEKIT - a white tom-kit with blue eyes; deaf in one ear

SENIORS: WATERDAISY - a blue she-cat with amber eyes

DUSKFEATHER - a brown tabby tom with yellow eyes

BUSHCLAN

CAPTAIN: AZALEASKY - a once-pretty calico she-cat with seafoam-

green eyes

ASSEMBLY: MOSSTALON - a dark silver tom with amber eyes

BRIGHTFLAME - a light ginger tabby she-cat with bright amber eyes

RAPTORSTEP - a gray she-cat with darker spots and yellow eyes

SPLASHMUZZLE - a black tom with a white muzzle; sky-blue eyes

CURER: ASHCATCHER - a silver tabby she-cat with wide green eyes

LOOKOUTS: SILENTSKIP - a broad-shouldered blue she-cat with yellow eyes

GRAYLIGHT - a gray-and-white tom with blue eyes

BERRYFLOWER - a small ginger-and-cream she-cat with amber eyes
-pupil, PETALPAW

TRACKERS: STONETHISTLE - a blue tom with yellow eyes

FIREFALL - a tortoiseshell-and-cream she-cat with green eyes
-pupil, STEMPAW

RIVERASTER - a gray tabby she-cat with white paws and belly; pale blue eyes

IVYGAZE - a brown she-cat with green eyes

PUPILS: PETALPAW - a brown-and-white she-cat with light blue eyes

STEMPAW - a gray tom with green eyes

DAMES: PATCHBIRD - a calico she-cat with green eyes
-mother to STONETHISTLE's kits, PEBBLEKIT and POOLKIT

KITS: PEBBLEKIT - a calico she-cat with dark green eyes

POOLKIT - a blue tom-kit with bright yellow eyes

Prologue

PROLOGUE
AMBROSIASTAR

Most would find Silence's company a gift from the heavens. But Silence in the overgrown forest only meant one thing to AmberClan: they were being stalked. Silence wasn't a gift. Silence wasn't a break from all the loud noises. Silence was *danger*.

"Hurry, hurry!" a dark brown tabby ushered her Clanmates along, trotting on the outer ranks of the circle. Her amber gaze flicked to the bushes then to the head of a pale brown tom, then back to the bushes. Back and forth, back and forth until she couldn't stand it. She scurried up to the pale brown tom, ears pricked for any sound other than the soft pitter-patter of paws and quiet breathing of her Clanmates. "Ambrosiastar," she hissed softly, "you have to go faster. They're near, but they don't know exactly where we are. It'll only be a matter of minutes before they pinpoint our location."

The pale brown tom blinked at her, tail lashing. He halted, doing the exact opposite of the she-cat's plea.

"Icewhisper." He meowed gravely, watching his Clanmates part the way for a frail silver tom. The silver tom stared at Ambrosiastar sadly, whiskers trembling and a knowing look in his distant yellow eyes. "I'm so sorry."

Icewhisper merely shook his head. "I'm honored you chose me."

The other ancient, Birdcall, let out a sad noise deep from her throat. Ambrosiastar turned to the dark tabby.

"Take our Clan away from here. I'll catch up."

The dark tabby's intense stare wavered, uncertainty sparking in her amber orbs. "But Ambrosiastar, what if-"

"Go, now!" he raised his voice. He heard their predators, the loud cry of a velociraptor. They were nearing, and they were getting excited.

The dark tabby rounded up her Clanmates before heading for the undergrowth. As her Clanmates filed past her, she shot one more glance at her commander before trailing after AmberClan.

Ambrosiastar turned his focus back to Icewhisper. "AmberClan is in debt to you."

Icewhisper said nothing. Instead, he nosed a sharp rock over to Ambrosiastar. "Do it."

Ambrosiastar hesitantly took the rock into his jaws. Icewhisper gave him a small nod, clenching his jaw. Ambrosiastar brought the rock down on Icewhisper's side, breaking the skin. Blood steadily flowed out, staining the green grass crimson. Ambrosiastar set the bloody rock beside Icewhisper, dashing away before the velociraptors spotted him. Icewhisper started letting out yowls of pain to catch the attention of any velociraptors that went after AmberClan. Ambrosiastar didn't turn around as he heard the joyous screeches of velociraptors. He tried to get rid of the vision of Icewhisper getting torn and shredded, but it haunted him as he ran. Every muscle in his body told him to go back and save the one he chose to sacrifice, but he wouldn't be able to save Icewhisper. He'd just get killed too.

The tail of one of his Clanmates disappeared behind a large fern. Ambrosiastar ducked beneath the fern, identifying the tail as Cassowaryshade. She seemed to have heard him and twisted around, her green eyes lighting up.

"Ambrosiastar's here!" she whisper-shouted, sending a buzz of chatter through the traveling Clan.

Ambrosiastar plastered a fake smile onto his face. He could feel the sorrow for Icewhisper in the air, but it was normal for ancients to give up their lives for their Clan.

"Splinterbite," he called the dark tabby over. "Thank you."

Splinterbite seemed thoroughly confused about why he was thanking her, but she nodded. "You're welcome?"

Before Ambrosiastar could explain why, one of the trainees padded up to him, visibly troubled.

"Where's Icewhisper?" it was Magnoliapaw. Her tone was concerned for the late ancient.

Ambrosiastar sucked in a breath. "He's gone."

Magnoliapaw tilted her head. "How? Why? What'd you do to him?!" her voice nearly rose to a wail, but Splinterbite hissed at her to quiet down. "You left him, you raptor-heart!"

"You'll understand why when you're older." Ambrosiastar meowed quietly, knowing he probably deserved that insult. He was a raptor-heart. Was Icewhisper's sacrifice necessary?

Splinterbite spoke for Ambrosiastar. "Don't speak to your commander like that. He saved all of our tails."

"Icewhisper did." Magnoliapaw growled, looking away. "Not him."

Splinterbite opened her jaws to put the young molly in her place, but a sharp look from Ambrosiastar silenced her. He gave a small shake of his head, telling her to drop the matter.

Magnoliapaw sent Ambrosiastar one more hateful glance before whirling away, joining her circle of Clanmates who all stared at Ambrosiastar and Splinterbite expectantly.

"Let's go."

Chapter One

CHAPTER ONE
TUMBLESTONE

"Keep your eyes open," that was Cascadespirit telling her trainee what to do for the umpteenth time. Vinepaw seemed mildly annoyed, but she dipped her head, acknowledging her mentor's words. The trainee was two moons into her training and Cascadespirit was still going over things fighter trainees learned on their first day.

If Tumblestone was being brutally honest, Cascadespirit was going over the top. She treated Vinepaw as though the brown-and-white she-cat couldn't remember any information. She knew Cascadespirit had a trainee once, and that trainee died because he didn't follow the rules, but Vinepaw seemed to respect and remember the rules.

"Oh, and never stray away from the patrol." Cascadespirit added, ears flicking.

Vinepaw let out an impatient huff. "Okay, I get it. Can we go on patrol now?"

Cascadespirit's blue eyes darted over to Tumblestone's green ones. "I don't know. Will she be safe?"

Vinepaw was staring daggers at Tumblestone. Did she think Tumblestone would also hold her back? Vinepaw clearly didn't know Tumblestone that well.

"Of course she is," she purred. "Why wouldn't she be? She's gone on multiple patrols before."

"But it's her first time in this territory." Cascadespirit fretted. "Don't wander off!" she told Vinepaw again.

Vinepaw's claws slid out and retracted back, flexing over and

over. Cascadespirit was oblivious to her trianee's upset stance and distractedly walked over to Lakeberry and Okapistripe, the only gatherers in camp at the moment. The other fighters and gatherers were out of camp, scouting around the new territory.

Tumblestone shared a look with Vinepaw before padding over as well. Vinepaw trailed after her.

Okapistripe's gaze slid past Cascadespirit and met Tumblestone's, flashing her a smile. Or perhaps he was looking at Vinepaw, his daughter.

"...could go." Lakeberry finished her sentence just as Tumblestone got there. "Okapistripe, are you going to bring Magnoliapaw?"

Okapistripe nodded. "She needs to practice in this new terrain."

Vinepaw's mutter reached Tumblestone's ears. "I bet she won't be told the rules thousands of times."

Swallowing a purr of amusement, Tumblestone followed the patrol out. The jungle was alive with sounds. Tumblestone spied two baby sloths up ahead, and the others noticed too. The gatherers seemed particularly excited.

"Let's catch them!" whispered Okapistripe excitedly. "Magnoliapaw, you know the drill."

The trainee hesitated. Lakeberry also seemed unwilling to hunt.

"There's two of them, Okapistripe, and only three of us." Was she discarding the fighters? Tumblestone narrowed her eyes, about to remind Lakeberry that they existed, but Vinepaw beat her to it.

"What about us? We can surely help." Vinepaw pointed out.

Lakeberry snorted. "You fighters know nothing about hunting."

Tumblestone flicked her tail. "What could be so different about our jobs? We both attack other animals, we both aim to kill it."

Lakeberry's nostrils flared, opening her jaws to drag the

argument on, but Okapistripe intervened. "We could try with the fighters helping."

Lakeberry started nodding with Okapistripe. Tumblestone narrowed her eyes at the silver tabby, letting out a cross sniff.

She suddenly agrees because she likes him. A voice in her head chimed in. Tumblestone smirked to herself, Lakeberry was a little late. Okapistripe was already taken.

Vinepaw puffed her chest out. Okapistripe beamed at her proudly, ruffling the fur on top of her head in a fatherly way.

"Okay," Lakeberry tensed visibly, eyeing Vinepaw's tuft of ruffled fur, "can we go onto hunting the sloths? They'll lumber into the field before we can get to them, then they'll become tyrannosaurus rex food."

Okapistripe nodded. "Okay, here's the plan..."

Once he finished, the patrol split into two groups, each one going to tackle their own sloth. Tumblestone was placed with Lakeberry (...yay) and Magnoliapaw. Cascadespirit, Okapistripe, and Vinepaw were the other trio.

There were two things about sloths. One, they weren't frightened by the presence of the cats, but they weren't aggravated about their presence either. Two, they were tasty to eat, so this would be worth the fight.

"We usually hunt down one kit sloth, never two. It takes a lot taking down one, and they're not even adults." Magnoliapaw explained to Tumblestone when Tumblestone asked her why they were so hesitant before. "Can you imagine us bringing an adult sloth? I don't think we could even drag it across the territory, they're huge!"

"I see." Tumblestone laughed, remembering seeing an adult sloth before. It was easily half of the size of a tree when at its full height. She wasn't sure it was even at its full height when she saw one.

"Enough chatter." Lakeberry snapped, whisking her tail to beckon

the other two she-cats to follow. She briskly sprinted at one of the sloths, starting the hunt.

Energy buzzed throughout Tumblestone as she leapt onto the small (well, if you count 'small' as the size of a velociraptor) sloth. The other sloth noticed its companion was in trouble, but Okapistripe's group tackled that one before it could swing at Tumblestone with its long claws.

Tumblestone noticed Magnoliapaw jump away when the sloth threw a hefty blow at her. Lakeberry's teeth were locked on its throat, savagely twisting and turning to attempt to pierce its flesh through the thick fur. Tumblestone's eyes widened when she saw the sloth's arm flying at her.

"Watch out!" Tumblestone flew at Lakeberry, sending both of them rolling out of reach. Lakeberry was on her paws quicker than Tumblestone, spitting with rage.

"What'd you do that for?!" Lakeberry spat at Tumblestone. "I nearly got it!"

"I saved your life, you're welcome!" Tumblestone was outraged. She was so ungrateful.

"This is why fighters and gatherers don't work together. You're more focused on getting out of dangerous situations unharmed, I'm more focused on killing the prey." Lakeberry hissed, eyes narrowing. "Stay out of my fight. Come on, Magnoliapaw. Let's finish what we started."

Lakeberry leapt back toward the sloth, who was helping its companion. Magnoliapaw sent Tumblestone an averse look, shaking her head with disappointment. Tumblestone wordlessly watched the trainee jump away. What did she do wrong? Lakeberry could've gotten seriously hurt!

While she saved Lakeberry from harm, Lakeberry didn't return the favor. Instead, she hurt Tumblestone, wounding her pride and dignity.

Lakeberry's words still stung after both sloths had been wrestled to the ground and killed. Cascadespirit was giving her a weird look, white muzzle stained with blood.

"Why weren't you helping?" Vinepaw bounded over, voice accusing. "You weren't slacking, right?"

"No." Tumblestone managed to say, avoiding Lakeberry's boiling glare. "I just wasn't prepared for the fight."

Chapter Two

CHAPTER TWO
FOGGYPUDDLE

Not a single muscle moved in Foggypuddle's body as she watched a hunter take down a microraptor, a small, winged animal that looked slightly like a velociraptor. Goldensap avoided a bite from the microraptor and dived in for a blow at the face before jumping back. The microraptor flailed its winged legs, trying to whip Goldensap with its long tail. Goldensap swiftly leapt on the small dinosaur, wrestling with the squirmy creature. It let out a pained squeal as Goldensap gave it the finishing bite, holding onto its throat. The microraptor struggled and thrashed, but the panicky microraptor eventually went limp.

"Well done," Foggypuddle praised, not sure what to say when Goldensap looked her way. That had been chaotic to watch.

Goldensap tilted his head, yellow eyes clouding with confusion. "But that kill was so messy! I could've done better."

With no knowledge about hunting, the head guard simply shrugged. "Hey, at least you killed it. That's what should matter."

Goldensap narrowed his eyes. "But look at how bloody this area is! A predator is going to come investigate and follow the scent trail-"

"How often has that happened?" Foggypuddle interrupted, wondering how much fear Pinefall instilled into the hunters. "Besides, I don't see anything from here. By the time a dinosaur comes by, the scent will be stale." She jumped down from a rock gracefully, landing lightly in front of Goldensap. "We'll be fine. It's never happened in my lifetime where a dinosaur was so clever it followed a scent trail of blood and found RaptorClan, and I'm much older than you."

Goldensap dipped his head in acknowledgment, but doubt still glittered in his yellow eyes. "I see, Foggypuddle."

"Let's find the others." Foggypuddle led the way, never letting her guard down. Her ears were swiveling back and forth, eyes scanning the landscape in front of her, mouth slightly open to taste the air.

Goldensap was more focused on not tripping on the lanky body of the microraptor, holding his head high with his muzzle pointed to the sky. Suddenly, she heard a snap to the right of her. There was no need to warn Goldensap as he too was focused on the sound, but she did anyway.

"Wait, I heard something." She didn't need to look at Goldensap to feel his nasty glare on the backside of her head. "Stay here, I'll investigate."

With very cautious steps, she approached where the sound came from.

"Hello?" Foggypuddle meowed, ears straining to hear anything. She heard something chewing, teeth gnashing loudly together before swallowing. By the sound, it was safe. No carnivore ate like that. "It's safe."

She parted the fronds, spotting a Triceratops. Thankfully, it was turned away from her, munching on some leaves. There were more near it, eating peacefully. She turned around, nearly crashing into Goldensap.

"It's a Triceratops, but it'd be best to keep our distance. Those things are aggressive. There are others around, too. I don't think-"

A roar thundered behind her. Foggypuddle quickly peeked through the fronds, trying to see if the Triceratops were coming their way. The Triceratops kept roaring, stomping their big feet and throwing their horned heads. Foggypuddle gasped, facing Goldensap.

"It's Skypaw!" she cried, observing the scene some more. Skypaw's moss-green eyes were wide with fear as she skittered

around, dodging lethal swings from the Triceratops and avoiding their legs.

"What are you going to do?" Goldensap asked, pulling up to her.

"I don't know." Foggypuddle replied, dread forming in her belly.

"You're the head guard and you're going to just sit there?" Goldensap snarled, but he wasn't mad at her. Fear was the only detectable feeling in his tone.

"I'm not going to sit here." Foggymuddle gritted her teeth, surveying the scene once more. A plan formed in her head and she turned to Goldensap. "I'm going to save Skypaw, but I need you to make some noise over here to distract some Triceratops."

Goldensap looked uncertain. "Will you come save me after?"

"No," she bluntly meowed. "Just climb a tree and make some noises."

Goldensap sighed, trudging toward a large tree. Giving Foggypuddle a firm nod once he was positioned on a low branch, he began to yowl and screech.

Wait, not yet! Foggypuddle's tail bushed out when she saw some Triceratops looking in her direction, noticing the sounds Goldensap made. She quickly darted to the left, trying to let the plants conceal her as three Triceratops went to investigate the noises. Three Triceratops were left, approaching Skypaw.

Foggypuddle mentally prepared herself, watching a Triceratops raise its head to strike at Skypaw, who now moved sluggishly, exhausted from avoiding the Triceratops. Foggypuddle sprinted from her spot, throwing herself at the horns of the Triceratops as it swung. She slammed into the horns, her forelegs hanging onto one. Terror pulsed through her, but she took a glance and was thankful to see Skypaw unscathed.

"Run!" Foggypuddle screeched at her, her hindlegs scrabbling at one of the other horns. Skypaw gave her a frightened look before scrambling away, passing one of the Triceratops. The Triceratops

didn't notice her, too focused on Foggypuddle now. The Triceratops she hung onto now threw its head all around, trying to throw her off. Foggypuddle slid onto its face, desperately trying to latch onto it, but the scales plating its face wouldn't let her claws sink into them. There was only one place where she could hold on.

She dug her claws into one of the Triceratops eyes, knowing this would not end well. The Triceratops let out another roar, this one louder than all the others. With a mighty swing with its head, Foggypuddle lost her grip and flew. She twisted her body to see where'd she land and braced herself for the impact. She landed awkwardly on her leg, but she didn't let that stop her. The three Triceratops thundered after her, but a loud roar stopped all of them. The ground shook as a Tyrannosaurus erupted from the trees, lunging at one of the Triceratops.

Foggypuddle's breath hitched in her throat as she limped into the safety of the undergrowth. The other three Triceratops that had went to investigate the sounds Goldensap made noticed the immediate danger and went to go help their companions. She looked up, spotting Goldensap's ginger tail.

"Goldensap!" she hissed through clenched teeth, hobbling over to the branch he was on. Goldensap looked over his shoulder, eyes wide as the moon.

"Fang and Leaf are mad at each other!" Goldensap meowed. "But what's worse is that Leaf is mad at us! The Triceratops attacked Skypaw a-and you! They shouldn't have..." he trailed off, expression troubled.

"We have to warn our Clan. Those Triceratops have probably alerted every major carnivore over, and it's unfortunate that a Tyrannosaurus came first." Foggypuddle heard the Tyrannosaurus let out a triumphant roar. She ran after Goldensap, wincing whenever her injured leg hit the ground.

Three cats were ahead of them, helping a brown she-cat back to camp.

Foggypuddle let out a cry. "Ripplethorn!" she caught the blue-

furred hunter's attention.

Ripplethorn looked over her shoulder. "What's happening? Skypaw got away and she said you saved her life by throwing yourself at one, but now it sounds like there's a Tyrannosaurus-"

"There is." Foggypuddle meowed, exhaling loudly to cover up a whimper when she leaned back to sit down. Her leg burned with pain, wailing to her to get off of it.

"That's not good." Figfrost, the guard accompanying the two hunters, murmured, eyeing Foggypuddle's pained expression. "Are you okay?"

Foggypuddle let out a breathy laugh. "Yes, of course. Why wouldn't I be? Can we go back to camp now?" she didn't want any more questions. She tried to sprint as normally as she could, leading the way back to camp.

Chapter Three

CHAPTER THREE
CONIFERCLOUD

Conifercloud pushed herself out of her warm nest, noisily stepping over her sleeping kits without a thought about them. She slid out of the den, beelining toward the prey pile. It wasn't much of a pile, though. With only one piece of prey remaining, Conifercloud plucked the mouse off, leaving the pile dry. She noticed one of the tyros wistfully eyeing the mouse that hung from her maw, but there was no way she was giving this up for a semi-starving tyro. First come, first serve.

Upon entering the nursery, her two kits were up and bumbling around, noticing her in an instant.

"Conifercloud!" they cheered, eyes glued to the mouse. They trotted over, weaving in between her legs to try and snatch the mouse out of her jaws.

Conifercloud let out a sharp snort, shaking her head. She set the mouse down, digging into it.

One of her kits jabbed her in the side. "Can we please have a bite?"

"Didn't you eat recently?" Conifercloud asked after swallowing her bite, keeping an eye on her mouse as she glanced at Brookkit.

"Yesterday..." Canopykit murmured. "Now my belly is growling."

Conifercloud pulled the mouse closer to her body. "Your father will bring you something once he returns from patrol. This is *my* mouse." The matriarch noticed a pair of glinting ice-blue eyes in the corner of her peripheral vision. Gazaniabloom was glaring at her, disapproving of her selfishness.

"Just one bite." Brookkit pleaded, unwilling to back down.

Conifercloud bared her teeth at him, growling. Before she could snap at him to go play with Canopykit, an alarming cry bounced around camp.

"Get out of camp!" the cry belonged to Foggypuddle.

Brookkit and Canopykit shared a silent look of surprise while Conifercloud quickly wolfed down the rest of her mouse, not caring to bury the bones. She hurried outside, her kits bouncing at her flanks.

In the middle of camp Foggypuddle waited stiffly for Slothleaf, wincing every time she shifted her stance. Movement flickered in the corner of her eye, and Sandcreek's patrol shouldered their way through the low-hanging branches. All the cats in that patrol stopped, noticing the tension crackling in the air. Sandcreek's eyes flitted around the clearing before landing on Conifercloud, eyes glowing with love. He was the first one to move from his patrol, pressing his flank against hers once he made it to his mate.

"What's going on?" Sandcreek's muzzle was pressed against her ear, his words barely a breath.

Conifercloud scrutinized the situation through narrowed eyes, answering her mate with a mere shrug. "Beats me."

Slothleaf, the chief, and Pinefall, the head hunter, padded up to Foggypuddle. Slothleaf had a knowing look while Pinefall seemed particularly annoyed by Foggypuddle.

"Fang and Leaf - they're both mad!" Foggypuddle immediately began. Gasps met her words, but Slothleaf raised his fluffy cream tail, silencing the gathered cats. "They're mad at each other, but I fear Leaf is mad at us."

Cats began spinning theories, throwing them wildly across the clearing. Some were just statements and questions, though.

"Leaf, mad at us? Why would Fang be protecting us from her fury?"

"Some cat angered Leaf... but for what good reason?"

"I bet some cat accidentally sacrificed their prey to Leaf instead of Fang." At this theory, Conifercloud rolled her eyes. She tried to scout out who said that, but Pinefall's commanding tone stopped all conversations.

"Somebody... is a traitor." Pinefall began, gaze landing on every single cat. When he met Conifercloud's amber gaze, she could only see disgust swimming in his green optics. Disgust for whoever the traitor may be.

Conifercloud glanced at Sandcreek, wondering if her light-hearted mate would even attempt upsetting one of their gods.

"Until we root out the traitor," the head hunter's lip drew back at the word *traitor*, "we will act like everything is okay."

"No, we have to go." Foggypuddle and Slothleaf meowed, synchronized. The few cats that crowded behind Foggypuddle nodded their heads shakily.

"A Tyrannosaurus rex has come into our territory as a few of you know." Foggypuddle sent a glance over her shoulder. "If it catches our scent before we're long gone..." she didn't have to finish.

Slothleaf took over, padding toward the entrance. "Every cat, follow me." In RaptorClan, there was no circle protecting the weaker cats unlike AmberClan's system. If you lagged behind, you could call for some cat to wait, but no cat would willingly wait for you on their accord.

Conifercloud turned to follow everyone, but Brookkit bumped her leg, begging to be picked up. Conifercloud stifled an irritated sigh and picked the blue-and-cream tom up by his scruff. Sandcreek picked Canopykit up before she even had to ask.

Sandcreek trotted ahead to catch up with the other guards, leaving Conifercloud in the dust. Conifercloud walked in the back of the Clan, her only companion Brookkit, who she would've gratefully swapped out any day.

"Mama, I'm hungry."

"Mama, my scruff hurts."

"Can I ride your back?"

"I need to go - badly..."

Brookkit was squirmy now, kicking his legs and wriggling his torso. Conifercloud sighed, setting him down. She scanned the lush undergrowth, but before she led him into the jungle, she asked the nearest cat, Grassbreeze, to come with her. Protection, you could say that.

"Be quick." Conifercloud muttered, hearing the distant roar of the Tyrannosaurus rex that had everyone worrying. Brookkit shuffled into the bushes, taking a while to reappear. Their Clanmates were long gone, and Grassbreeze was giving Conifercloud a rather foul look. Annoyed, Conifercloud snapped at her. "What?"

"Was me accompanying you two necessary?" Grassbreeze grumbled, indicating in the direction of their Clanmates. She seemed unnaturally sour about being left behind.

"It was." Conifercloud meowed, cropped and cold. "You never know what to expect in this dinosaur-filled world. Having an extra cat is always necessary."

Grassbreeze made an acknowledging sound, but she looked away, grounding her teeth. "Let's catch up."